

**SC Food Policy Council Meeting Revised Notes
Monday, March 12, 2007**

Attendees:

Jay Daniels	SC Governors Council on Physical Fitness
Frank Blum	SC Seafood Alliance
Chris Daly	Harvest Hope Food Bank
John Dean	USC – Sustainable Seafood Initiative
Larry McKenzie	SC Farm Bureau
Jennifer Moore	United Way – Midlands
Rebecca Wrenn	DHEC
Kristi Jacques	The Wellness Council
Teresa Hill	DHEC
Diane Conte	Prevention Partners, Employee Insurance Program
Susan Frost	DHEC
Honorable Laurie Funderburk	SC House of Representatives
Sandy Spann	DHEC
Jack Edgerton	Allen Brothers Milling, Co.
Gerry Cohn	American Farmland Trust
Joe James	The Corporation for Economic Opportunity
Barry Forde	SC Food Bank Association
Keith Wiloughby	Wil-More Farms
Mark VanOstenbridge	BI-LO, Bruno Stores
Roy Copelan	SC Beef Board
Chad Truesdale	SC Pork Board
Julie Huffman	SC Peach Council
Beth Crocker	SC Dept. of Agriculture
Honorable Hugh E. Weathers	SC Dept. of Agriculture

Chairperson Susan Frost welcomed everyone to the meeting by giving a brief overview of the meeting format, and then began the meeting with introduction of all attendees. Susan also referenced the South Carolina Food Policy Council 2006 Recommendations document that was submitted to Commissioner Weathers on January 3, 2007, and is currently available by contacting Beth Crocker at the SC Department of Agriculture.

Susan Frost also noted that there are 3 new Board members: Keith Wiloughby of Wil-More Farms in Kershaw County; Charles Wingard with Walter P. Rawl Farms in Lexington, and Dr. Sonja Jones with the University of South Carolina School of Public Health.

Commissioner Hugh Weathers was able to join the meeting and give comments regarding the Department's actions related to the recent 2006 Recommendations submitted by the Council in early January 2007. Commissioner Weathers commented on the new Branding Program which has received funding this past year, and is currently seeking

permanent funding during the current legislative session for \$750,000 to continue the initial efforts of this program. The Council recommended that a statewide branding program be ramped up to help consumers identify South Carolina products when shopping and making purchases. Commissioner commented that this new branding program will be going public in mid-May and encouraged everyone to become familiar with the new logo. The Department is currently partnering with grocery stores to help promote the logo and the availability of South Carolina products on grocery store shelves. Commissioner also commented that the logo will be used on seafood products as well, and that at least one television commercial in the works will highlight SC seafood.

Through the branding program, Commissioner also envisions that the Department will be partnering with restaurants to highlight meals and menus that offer South Carolina products. This ties in with the Council's recommendation that encouraging cities to market themselves to tourist and local residents as having great food and cuisine highlighting local produce.....

Commissioner also commented on the importance of Farmland Preservation and SmartGrowth and his ideas that great advertisement and promotion of South Carolina products will increase rural economic development and providing greater profitability to farms in rural areas. Commissioner also commented on Governor Sanford's recent efforts related to economic development within our State. Commissioner told Sanford that Agriculture really needs to be at the table when these types of discussions and policy groups are meeting with regard to the development of our state and its natural resources.

Regarding the Council's recommendation for the construction of community kitchens in our State, Commissioner discussed that there is already some interest in this concept in the Charleston area that he is currently aware of. He believes that in order for these programs to be successful it will be imperative to have commitments from the community and the people utilizing these facilities. He thinks that community kitchens have the potential to help local farmers package their products to make them more competitive for receiving local school contracts, and he also thinks that these types of community kitchen facilities can provide a needed location for consumers who need access to a commercial facility to produce and package South Carolina products to be sold in the public market.

Commissioner also commented on the Council's recommendation for the construction of a shrimp processing facility. He mentioned the current project that is progressing in Williamsburg County, which is exploring the implementation of this type of facility. There is also discussion of a similar facility being constructed in Beaufort.

Commissioner commented on the legislation that has been introduced by Representative Funderburk dealing with unfair trade practices related to improperly labeling produce and food products as being local or farm raised, when they are not. He also commented on the Council recommendation regarding value added programs that will help producers get more for their product. He spoke about the Agriculture Forum that the Palmetto Institute organized last fall and the emphasis that was placed on this same issue of adding value to

our raw SC agricultural products. One example of a value added facility might be recruiting a peanut processor to locate in SC, rather than always shipping peanuts out of state for further processing.

The Commissioner also commented on the Council's recommendation to look at the aging farming population here in our State. Commissioner believes that profitability is the key to encouraging the next generation to continue farming in this State. We need to put young people in a position to make a profit with farming as a way of life and helping them to see it as a viable career opportunity.

Commissioner thanked the group for their comments and time devoted to putting together the report. In closing the Commissioner commented that sometimes it's hard for him not to get too impatient for change, but reminded the group that good things take time.

After the Commissioner's comments, Susan Frost guided the discussion of the group in reviewing the issues identified in the report, and asked the group to narrow down the identify their top priorities that they would like to focus on this year.

Comments from the group regarding priority issues were:

Because the Department has started the Branding program and because it seems to be on track for receiving additional funding, that issue can be taken off of the list for now.

- Recruiting agricultural commerce and industry, should continue to be a priority. This also encompasses the importance of rural economic development in our State.
- Sustaining existing agricultural enterprises should also be a top priority, and this can act as a recruiting tool for new agricultural businesses considering SC; if current enterprises are happy and being treated well, that can be a perk for choosing SC. There is also a model program in VA that we might want to look at implementing here in SC to provide that support to existing agricultural enterprises.
- Create a task force to look at issues related to agribusiness development in SC. This would include supporting existing businesses and further development, as well as recruiting and developing new business.
- Classification of agribusinesses so that they are considered "agricultural" for purposes of property taxation, versus a classification as industry. This was brought up as an example of one way that we might support existing current agribusinesses and possibly for the purpose of recruiting new agribusinesses as well.
- Loss of dock space should be a top priority because without dock space, the seafood industry will not have a way to move their product in to the

customer. Dock space for industry is highly competitive with residential use. (\$\$\$)

- Support funding of USDA Fruit and Vegetable program.
- Establishing a Farm Bill Agenda since the 2007 Federal Farm bill is currently being drafted.
- Back Pack Food Program for Children. Currently there are at least 3 programs in SC, but there is strong interest in providing for even more programs throughout the State.
- Support existing, as well as implementing new food and nutrition programs throughout our State.
- Improving the education and information available to the general public related to hunger problems in SC. Want to improve the number of actions and opportunities available to address hunger in SC.
 - SNAP Bill – will allow the purchase of specific nutrition foods. Currently there is legislation asking for \$2 million dollars for this program to be administered through our state food banks.
- Seed Program – interest in providing more opportunities for schools and communities to learn about growing their own vegetables. Working with commodity groups to provide seeds for these types of programs? What about support from Clemson extension? Other ?

The meeting concluded around 4:00 pm.